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RABINDRANATH TAGORE

Sacrifice

Editor

R. K. Bansal

Publishers

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Sacrifice

Second Prose for Intermediate Classes (Drama)

By

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Publishers

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***Dedicated
to
my father
Sri D. R. Gupta***

R. K. B.

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PREFACE

No apology is needed and none is offered for selecting a text book of English written by an Indian because to the mind of Indian readers an Indian author would send a more direct appeal than a foreign author can. But here is an Indian author, Dr. Rabindranath Tagore, who can beat the best English authors on their own grounds and keep his own characteristic traits in reserve. Tagore stands for the best of the East and the West and he blends in him the broad outlook of modern times and spiritualism of the old times. This play, "SACRIFICE", is specially suitable in the modern context and teaches the modern man the meaning and need of religion according to present day requirements. Its importance in teaching the young readers what they need most can, therefore, hardly be exaggerated.

The play has been chosen taking into consideration the mental level and grasp of the students of Intermediate classes today and in its language, atmosphere and theme the play is within their easy reach. At the same time the standard of language and subject matter is as high as can be possible for the need of the young readers and as can be expected of a genius of Tagore's calibre as writer, thinker, preacher and artist.

I shall be amply rewarded for my labour if the book satisfies the need of the students for whom it has been edited and inspires them to high ideals and noble ways of living and thinking.

Chandausi,

R. K. B.

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Editor

DEDICATION

"I DEDICATE THIS PLAY
TO THOSE HEROES WHO
BRAVELY STOOD FOR PEACE
WHEN HUMAN SACRIFICE
WAS CLAIMED FOR THE
GODDESS OF WAR."

—*R. N. Tagore*

CHARACTERS OF THE PLAY

Male Characters :

- GOVINDA — King of Tripura.
NAKSHATRA — King's Brother.
RAGHUPATI — The Priest of the Temple in.
Tippera.
JAISING — The Servant of the Temple.
NAYAN RAI — General of the Army.
CHANDPAL — Second in Command of the Army.
DRUVA — A Boy.

King's Minister, Attendants And Citizens.

Female Characters :

- GUNAVATI — Queen of Tripura.
APARNA — A Beggar Girl.

SACRIFICE

SCENE I

A temple in Tippera

(*Enters GUNAVATI, the Queen.*)

Gunavati

Have I offended thee, dread Mother? Thou grantest children to the beggar woman, who sells them to live, and to the adulteress, who kills them to save herself from infamy, and here am I, the Queen, with all the world lying at my feet, hankering in vain for the baby-touch at my bosom, to feel the stir of a dearer life within my life. What sin have I committed, Mother, to merit this,—to be banished from the mothers' heaven?

2 (*Enters RAGHUPATI, the priest.*)

O Master, have I ever been remiss in my worship? And my husband, is he not godlike in his purity? Then why has the Goddess, who weaves the web of this world-illusion, assigned my place in the barren waste of childlessness?

Raghupati

Our Mother is all caprice, she knows no law, our sorrows and joys are mere freaks of her mind. Have patience, daughter, today we shall offer special sacrifice in your name to please her.

Gunavati

Accept my grateful obeisance, father. My offerings are already on their way to the temple,—the red bunches of hibiscus and beasts of sacrifice.

[They go out.]

(Enter GOVINDA, the King ; JAISING, the servant of temple ; and APARNA, the beggar girl.)

Jaising

What is your wish, Sire ?

Govinda

Is it true that this poor girl's pet goat has been brought by force to the temple to be killed ? Will Mother accept such a gift with grace ?

Jaising

King, how are we to know from whence the servants collect our daily offerings of worship ? But, my child, why is this weeping ? Is it worthy of you to shed tears for that which Mother herself has taken ?

Aparna

3
Mother ! I am his mother. If I return late to my hut, he refuses his grass, and bleats with his eyes on the road. I take him up in my arms, when I come, and share my food with him. He knows no other mother but me.

Jaising

Sire, could I make the goat live again, by giving up a portion of my life, gladly would I do it. But how can I restore that which Mother herself has taken ?

Aparna

Mother has taken ? It is a lie. Not mother, but demon.

Jaising

O, the blasphemy !

Aparna

Mother, art thou there to rob a poor girl of her love ? Then where is the throne, before which to condemn thee ? Tell me, King.

Govinda

4 I am silent, my child. I have no answer.

Aparna

5
This blood-streak running down the steps, is it his ? O my darling, when you trembled

and cried for dear life, why did your call not reach my heart through the whole deaf world ?

§

Jaising

(To the image) I have served thee from my infancy, Mother Kali, yet I understand thee not. Does pity only belong to weak mortals, and not to gods ? Come with me, my child, let me do for you what I can. Help must come from man, when it is denied from gods.

[Jaising and Aparna go out.]

(Enter RAGHUPATI ; NAKSHATRA, who is the King's brother : and the courtiers.)

All

Victory be to the King !

Govinda

Know you all, that I forbid shedding of blood in the temple from today for ever.

Minister

You forbid sacrifice to the Goddess ?

General Nayan Rai

Forbid sacrifice ?

Nakshatra

How terrible ! Forbid sacrifice ?

Raghupati

Is it a dream ?

Govinda

No dream, father. It is awakening. Mother came to me, in a girl's disguise, and told me that blood she cannot suffer.

Raghupati

She has been drinking blood for ages. Whence comes this loathing all of a sudden ?

Govinda

No, she never drank blood, she kept her face averted.

Raghupati

I warn you, think and consider. You have no power to alter laws laid down in scriptures.

Govinda

God's words are above all laws.

Raghupati

Do not add pride to your folly. Do you have the effrontery to say that *you* alone have heard God's words, and not I ?

Nakshatra

It is strange, that the King should have heard from gods and not the priest.

Govinda

God's words are ever ringing in the world, and he who is wilfully deaf cannot hear them.

Raghupati

Atheist ! Apostate !

Govinda

Father, go to your morning service, and declare to all worshippers that from hence they will be punished with banishment, who shed creatures' blood in their worship of the Mother of all creatures.

Raghupati

Is this your last word ?

Govinda

Yes.

Raghupati

Then curse upon you ! Do you, in your enormous pride, imagine that the Goddess dwelling in your land, is your subject ? Do you presume to bind her with your laws and rob her of her dues ? You shall never do it. I declare it,—I who am her servant. *[Goes.*

Nayan Rai

Pardon me, Sire, but have you the right ?

Minister

King, is it too late to revoke your order ?

Govinda

We dare not delay to uproot sin from our realm.

Minister

Sin can never have such a long lease of life.
 Could they be sinful,—the rites that have grown
 old at the feet of the Goddess ?

[The King is silent.]

Nakshatra

Indeed they could not be.

Minister

Our ancestors have performed these rites
 with reverence ; can you have the heart to
 insult them ?

[The King remains silent.]

Nayan Rai

That which has the sanction of ages, have
 you the right to remove it ?

Govinda

No more doubts and disputes. Go and
 spread my order in all my lands.

Minister

But, Sire, the Queen has offered her sacrifice
 for this morning's worship ; it has come near
 the temple gate.

Govinda

Send it back.

[He goes.]

Minister

What is this ?

Nakshatra

Are we, then, to come down to the level of Buddhists, and treat animals as if they have their right to live ? Preposterous !

[They all go out.]

(Enters RAGHUPATI,—JAISING following him with a jar of water to wash his feet.)

Jaising

Father.

Raghupati

Go !

Jaising

Here is some water.

Raghupati

No need of it !

Jaising

Your clothes.

Raghupati

Take them away !

Jaising

Have I done anything to offend you ?

Raghupati

6
 Leave me alone. The shadows of evil have thickened. \ The King's throne is raising its insolent head above the temple altar. Ye gods of these degenerate days, are ye ready to obey the King's laws with bowed heads, fawning upon him like his courtiers ? Have only men and demons combined to usurp gods' dominions in this world, and is heaven powerless to defend its honour ? \ But there remain the Brahmins, though the gods be absent ; and the King's throne will supply fuel to the sacrificial fire of their anger. My child, my mind is distracted.

Jaising

What has happened, father ?

Raghupati

I cannot find words to say. Ask the Mother Goddess who has been defied.

Jaising

Defied ? By whom ?

Raghupati

By King Govinda.

Jaising

King Govinda defied Mother Kali ?

Raghupati

Defied you and me, all scriptures, all countries, all time, defied Mahakali, the Goddess of the endless stream of time,—sitting upon that puny little throne of his.

Jaising

King Govinda ?

Raghupati

Yes, yes, your King Govinda, the darling of your heart. Ungrateful ! I have given all my love to bring you up, and yet King Govinda is dearer to you than I am.

Jaising

1 | The child raises its arms to the full moon, sitting upon his father's lap. You are my father, and my full moon is King Govinda. Then is it true, what I hear from people, that our King forbids all sacrifice in the temple ? But in this we cannot obey him. //

Raghupati

Banishment is for him who does not obey.

Jaising

It is no calamity to be banished from a land where Mother's worship remains incomplete.

No, so long as I live, the service of the temple shall be fully performed.

[They go out.]

(Enter GUNAVATI and her attendant.)

Gunavati

What is it you say? The Queen's sacrifice turned away from the temple gate? Is there a man in this land who carries more than one head on his shoulders, that he could dare think of it? Who is that doomed creature?

Attendant

I am afraid to name him.

Gunavati

Afraid to name him, when I ask you? Whom do you fear more than me?

Attendant

Pardon me.

Gunavati

Only last evening court minstrels came to sing my praise, Brahmins blessed me, the servants silently took their orders from my mouth. What can have happened, in the meantime, that things have become completely upset,—the Goddess refused her worship, and the Queen her authority. Was Tripura a

dreamland ? Give my salutation to the priest,
and ask him to come.

[Attendant goes out.

(Enters GOVINDA.)

Gunavati

Have you heard, King ? My offerings have
been sent black from Mother's temple.

Govinda

I know it.

Gunavati

You know it, and yet bear the insult ?

Govinda

I beg to ask your pardon for the culprit.

Gunavati

90 | I know, King, your heart is merciful, but
this is no mercy. It is feebleness. If your
kindness hampers you, leave the punishment in
my hand. Only, tell me who he is ? /

Govinda

It is I, my Queen. My crime was in nothing
else but having given you pain.

Gunavati

I do not understand you.

Govinda

From today shedding of blood in gods'
temples is forbidden in my land.

Gunavati

Who forbids it ?

Govinda

Mother herself.

Gunavati

Who heard it ?

Govinda

I.

Gunavati

You ! That makes me laugh. The Queen of all the world comes to the gate of Tripura's King with her petition.

Govinda

Not with her petition, but with her sorrow.

Gunavati

Your dominion is outside the temple limit. Do not send your commands there, where they are impertinent.

Govinda

The command is not mine, it is Mother's.

Gunavati

If you have no doubt in your decision, do not cross my faith. Let me perform my worship according to my light.

Govinda

I promised my Goddess to prevent sacrifice of life in her temple, and I must carry it out.

Gunavati

I also promised my Goddess the blood of three hundred kids and one hundred buffaloes, and I will carry it out. You may leave me now.

Govinda

As you wish.

[He goes out.]

(Enters RAGHUPATI.)

Gunavati

My offerings have been turned back from the temple, father.

Raghupati

9 1 The worship offered by the most ragged of all beggars is not less precious than yours, Queen. But the misfortune is that Mother has been deprived. The misfortune is that the King's pride is growing into a bloated monster, obstructing divine grace, fixing its angry red eyes upon all worshippers.

Gunavati

What will come of all this, father ?

Respect

Effect

10 **Raghupati** *throws*

That is only known to her, who fashions this world with her dreams. But this is certain, that the throne, which casts its shadow upon Mother's shrine, will burst like a bubble, vanishing in the void. *disappearing in nothingness*

— — — — — **Gunavati**

Have mercy and save us, father.

Raghupati

Ha, ha ! I am to save you,—you the consort of a King who boasts of his kingdom on the earth and in heaven as well, before whom the gods and the Brahmins must,—Oh, shame ! Oh, the evil age, when the Brahmin's futile curse recoils upon himself, to sting him into madness,

[About to tear his sacrificial thread.]

Gunavati

[Preventing him.] Have mercy upon me.

Raghupati

Then give back to Brahmins what are theirs by right.

Gunavati

Yes, I will. Go, master, to your worship and nothing will hinder you.

Raghupati

Indeed your favour overwhelms me. At the merest glance of your eyes gods are saved from ignominy and the Brahmin is restored to his sacred offices. Thrive and grow fat and sleek till the dire day of judgment comes.

[Goes out.]

(Re-enters KING GOVINDA.)

Govinda

My Queen, the shadow of your angry brows hides all light from my heart.

Gunavati

Go ! Do not bring a curse upon this house.

Govinda

Woman's smile removes all curse from the house, her love is God's grace.

Gunavati

Go, and never show your face to me again.

Govinda

I shall come back, my Queen, when you remember me.

Gunavati

[Clinging to the King's feet.] Pardon me, King. Have you become so hard that you forget to respect woman's pride ? Do you not

know, beloved, that thwarted love takes the disguise of anger ? | - - - - -

Govinda

I would die, if I lost my trust in you. I know, my love, that clouds are for moments only, and the sun is for all days.

Gunavati

Yes, the clouds will pass by, God's thunder will return to his armoury, and the sun of all days will shine upon the traditions of all time. Yes, my King, order it so that Brahmins be restored to their rights, the Goddess to her offerings, and the King's authority to its earthly limits.

Govinda

It is not the Brahmin's right to violate the eternal good. The creature's blood is not the offering for gods. And it is within the rights of the King and the peasant alike to maintain truth and righteousness.

Gunavati

I prostrate myself on the ground before you ; I beg at your feet. The custom, that comes through all ages, is not the King's own.

Like heaven's air, it belongs to all men. Yet your Queen begs it of you, with clasped hands, in the name of your people. Can you still remain silent, proud man, refusing entreaties of love in favour of duty which is doubtful? Then go, go, go from me. *[They go.]*

(Enter RAGHUPATI, JAISING and NAYAN RAI.)

Raghupati

General, your devotion to Mother is well known.

Nayan Rai

It runs through generations of my ancestors.

Raghupati

Let this sacred love give you indomitable courage. Let it make your sword-blade mighty as God's thunder, and win its place above all powers and positions of this world.

Nayan Rai

The Brahmin's blessings will never be in vain.

Raghupati

Then I bid you collect your soldiers and strike Mother's enemy down to the dust.

Nayan Rai

Tell me, father, who is the enemy ?

Raghupati

Govinda.

Nayan Rai

Our King ?

Raghupati

Yes, attack him with all your force.

Nayan Rai

It is evil advice. Father, is this to try me ?

Raghupati

Yes, it is to try you, to know for certain whose servant you are. Give up all hesitation. Know that the Goddess calls, and all earthly bonds must be severed.

Nayan Rai

I have no hesitation in my mind. I stand firm in my post, where my Goddess has placed me.

Raghupati

You are brave.

Nayan Rai

Am I the basest of Mother's servants, that the order should come for me to turn traitor ? She herself stands upon the faith of man's heart. Can she ask me to break it ? Then today comes to dust the King, and tomorrow the Goddess herself.

Jaising

Noble words.

Raghupati

The King, who has turned traitor to Mother, has lost all claims to your allegiance.

Nayan Rai

Drive me not, father, into a wilderness of debates. I know only one path,—the straight path of faith and truth. This stupid servant of Mother shall never swerve from that highway of honour.

[Goes out.]

Jaising

Let us be strong in our faith as he is, Master. Why ask the aid of soldiers ? We have the strength within ourselves for the task given to us from above. Open the temple gate wide, father. Sound the drum. Come, come, O citizens, to worship her, who takes all fear

away from our hearts. Come, Mother's children.

[Citizens come.]

First Citizen

Come, come, we are called.

All

Victory to Mother !

12

[They sing and dance.]

The dread Mother dances naked in the battle-field,

Her lolling tongue burns like a red flame of fire,

Her dark tresses fly in the sky, sweeping away the sun and stars,

Red streams of blood run from her cloud-black limbs,

And the world trembles and cracks under her tread. /

Jaising

Do you see the beasts of sacrifice coming towards the temple, driven by the Queen's attendants ?

[They cry.

Victory to Mother ! Victory to our Queen !

Raghupati

Jaising, make haste and get ready for the worship.

Jaising

Everything is ready, father.

Raghupati

Send a man to call Prince Nakshatra in my name.

*[Jaising goes. Citizens sing and dance,
(Enters GOVINDA with his attendants.)*

Govinda

Silence, Raghupati ! Do you dare to disregard my order ?

Raghupati

Yes, I do.

Govinda

Then you are not for my land.

Raghupati

No, my land is there, where the King's crown kisses the dust. No ! Citizens ! Let Mother's offerings be brought in here.

[They beat drums.

Govinda

Silence ! *(To his attendants.)* Ask my General to come. Raghupati, you drive me to call soldiers to defend God's right. I feel the shame of it ; for the force of arms only reveals man's weakness.

Raghupati

13
Sceptic, are you so certain in your mind that Brahmins have lost the ancient fire of their sacred wrath ? No, its flame will burst out from my heart to burn your throne into ashes. If it does not, then I shall throw into the fire the scriptures, and my Brahmin pride, and all the arrant lies that fill our temple shrines in the guise of the devine. |

(Enter GENERAL NAYAN RAI and CHANDPAL, who is the second in command of the army.)

Govinda

Stand here with your soldiers to prevent sacrifice of life in the temple.

Nayan Rai

Pardon me, Sire. The King's servant is powerless in the temple of God.

Govinda

General, it is not for you to question my order. You are to carry out my words. Their merits and demerits belong only to me.

Nayan Rai

I am your servant, my King, but I am a man above all. I have reason and my religion. I have my King,—and also my God.

Govinda

Then surrender your sword to Chandpal. He will protect the temple from pollution of blood.

Nayan Rai

Why to Chandpal? This sword was given to my forefathers by your royal ancestors. If you want it back, I will give it up to you. Be witness, my fathers, who are in the heroes' paradise,—the sword, that you made sacred with your loyal faith and bravery, I surrender to my King.

[Goes out.]

Raghupati

The Brahmin's curse has begun its work already.

(*Enters JAISING.*)

Jaising

The beasts have been made ready for the sacrifice.

Govinda

Sacrifice ?

Jaising

King, listen to my earnest entreaties. Do not stand in the way, hiding the Goddess, man as you are.

Raghupati

Shame, Jaising. Rise up and ask my pardon. I am your Master. Your place is at my feet, not the King's. Fool ! Do you ask King's sanction to do God's service ? Leave alone the worship and the sacrifice. Let us wait and see how his pride prevails in the end. Come away.

[They go out.]

SCENE II

(*Enters* APARNA.)

Aparna

Where is Jaising ? He is not here, but only you,—the image whom nothing can move. You rob us of all our best without uttering a word. We pine for love, and die beggars for want of it. Yet it comes to you unasked, though you need it not. Like a grave, you hoard it under your miserly stone, keeping it from the use of the yearning world ! Jaising, what happiness do you find from her ? What can she speak to you ? O my heart, my famished heart !

(*Enters* RAGHUPATI.)

Raghupati

Who are you ?

Aparna

I am a beggar girl. Where is Jaising ?

Raghupati

Leave this place at once. I know you are haunting this temple to steal Jaising's heart from the Goddess.

Aparna

Has the Goddess any thing to fear from me ?
I fear her.

[She goes out.]

(Enter JAISING and PRINCE NAKSHATRA.)

Nakshatra

Why have you called me ?

Raghupati

Last night the Goddess told me in a dream,
that you shall become king within a week.

Nakshatra

Ha, ha, this is news indeed.

Raghupati

Yes, you shall be king.

Nakshatra

I cannot believe it.

Raghupati

You doubt my words ?

Nakshatra

I do not want to doubt them. But suppose, by chance, it never comes to pass.

Raghupati

No, it shall be true.

Nakshatra

But, tell me, how can it ever become true ?

Raghupati

The Goddess thirsts for King's blood.

Nakshatra

King's blood ?

Raghupati

You must offer it to her before you can be king.

Nakshatra

I know not where to get it.

Raghupati

There is King Govinda.—Jaising, keep still.—Do you understand ? Kill him in secret. Bring his blood, while warm, to the altar.—Jaising, leave this place if you cannot remain still,—

Nakshatra

But he is my brother, and I love him.

Raghupati

Your sacrifice will be all the more precious.

Nakshatra

But, father, I am content to remain as I am. I do not want the kingdom.

Raghupati

There is no escape for you, because the Goddess commands it. She is thirsting for blood from the King's house. If your brother is to live, then you must die.

Nakshatra

Have pity on me, father.

Raghupati

You shall never be free in life, or in death, until her bidding is done.

Nakshatra

Advise me, then, how to do it.

Raghupati

Wait in silence. I will tell you what to do when the time comes. And now, go.

[Nakshatra goes.]

Jaising

What is it that I heard ? Merciful Mother, is it your bidding ? To ask brother to kill brother ? Mater, how could you say that it was mother's own wish ?

Raghupati

There was no other means but this to serve my Goddess.

Jaising

Means ? Why means ? Mother, have you not your own sword to wield with your own hand ? Must your wish burrow underground, like a thief, to steal in secret ? Oh, the sin !

Raghupati

What do you know about sin ?

Jaising

What I have learnt from you.

Raghupati

Then come and learn your lesson once again from me. Sin has no meaning in reality. To kill is but to kill,—it is neither sin nor anything else. Do you not know that the dust of this earth is made of countless killings ? Old Time

is ever writing the chronicle of the transient life of creatures in letters of blood | Killing is in the wilderness, in the habitations of man, in birds' nests, in insects' holes, in the sea, in the sky ; there is killing for life, for sport, for nothing whatever. The world is ceaselessly killing ; and the great Goddess Kali, the spirit of ever-changing time, is standing with her thirsty tongue hanging down from her mouth, with her cup in hand, into which is running the red life-blood of the world, like juice from the crushed cluster of grapes. |

17 Jaising

Stop, master. | Is, then, love a falsehood and mercy a mockery, and the one thing true, from beginning of time, the lust for destruction? Would it not have destroyed itself long ago? You are playing with my heart, my master. | Look there, she is gazing at me with her sweet mocking smile. My bloodthirsty Mother, wilt thou accept my blood? Shall I plunge this knife into my breast and make an end to my life, as thy child, for evermore? The life-blood, flowing in these veins, is it so delicious to thee? O my Mother, my bloodthirsty Mother.—Master, did you call me? I know you wanted

my heart to break its bounds in pain overflowing my Mother's feet. This is the true sacrifice. But King's blood ! The Mother, who is thirsting for our love, you accuse of bloodthirstiness !

Raghupati

Then let the sacrifice be stopped in the temple.

Jaising

Yes, let it be stopped—No, no, Master, you know what is right and what is wrong. The heart's laws are not the laws of scripture. Eyes cannot see with their own light,—the light must come from the outside. Pardon me, Master, pardon my ignorance. | Tell me, father, is it true that the Goddess seeks King's blood ?

Raghupati

Alas, child, have you lost your faith in me ?

Jaising

My world stands upon my faith in you. If the Goddess must have King's blood, let me bring it to her. I will never allow a brother to kill his brother.

Raghupati

But there can be no evil in carrying out God's wishes.

Jaising

No, it must be good, and I will earn the merit of it.

Raghupati

But, my boy, I have reared you from your childhood, and you have grown close to my heart. I can never bear to lose you, by any chance.

Jaising

I will not let your love for me be soiled with sin. Release Prince Nakshatra from his promise.

Raghupati

I shall think, and decide tomorrow.

[*He goes.*

Jaising

Deeds are better, however cruel they may be, than the hell of thinking and doubting. You are right, my Master ; truth is in your words. To kill is no sin, to kill brother is no

sin, to kill king is no sin.—Where do you go, my brothers ? To the fair at Nishipur ? There the women are to dance ? Oh, this world is pleasant ! And the dancing limbs of the girls are beautiful. In what careless merriment the crowds flew through the roads, making the sky ring with their laughter and song. I will follow them.

(*Enters RAGHUPATI.*)

Raghupati

Jaising.

Jaising

I do not know you. I drift with the crowd. Why ask me to stop ? Go your own way.

Raghupati

Jaising.

Jaising

The road is straight before me. With an alms-bowl in hand and the beggar girl as my sweetheart I shall walk on. Who says that the world's ways are difficult ? Anyhow we reach the end,—the end where all laws and rules are no more, where the errors and hurts of

life are forgotten, where is rest, eternal rest. What is the use of scriptures, and the teacher and his instructions?—My Master, my father, what wild words are these of mine? I was living in a dream. There stands the temple, cruel and immovable as truth. What was your order, my teacher? I have not forgotten it. (*Bringing out the knife.*) I am sharpening your words in my mind, till they become one with this knife in keenness. Have you any other order to give me?

Raghupati

My boy, my darling, how can I tell you how deep is my love for you?

Jaising

19
/ No, Master, do not tell me of love. Let me think only of duty. Love, like the green grass, and the trees, and life's music, is only for the surface of the world. It comes and vanishes like a dream. But underneath is duty, like the rude layers of stone, like a huge load that nothing can move. |

At the root of all pleasures *[They go out.]*
 सभी सुखों में जा

(Enter GOVINDA and CHANDPAL.)

Chandpal

Sire, I warn you to be careful.

Govinda

Why ? What do you mean ?

Chandpal

I have overheard a conspiracy to take away your life.

Govinda

Who wants my life ?

Chandpal

I am afraid to tell you, lest the news become to you more deadly than the knife itself. It was Prince Nakshatra, who—

Govinda

Nakshatra ?

Chandpal

He has promised to Raghupati to bring your blood to the Goddess.

Govinda

To the Goddess ? Then I cannot blame him. For a man loses his humanity when it

concerns his gods. You go to your work and leave me alone.

[Chandpal goes out.]

(Addressing the image.) Accept these flowers,

2 Goddess, and let your creatures live in peace.

1 Mother, those who are weak in this world are so helpless, and those who are strong are so cruel. Greed is pitiless, ignorance blind, and

pride takes no heed when it crushes the small under its foot. | Mother, do not raise your

sword and lick your lips for blood; do not set brother against brother, and woman against

man. If it is your desire to strike me by the hand of one I love, then let it be fulfilled. | For

the sin has to ripen to its ugliest limits before it can burst and die a hideous death; and

when King's blood is shed by a brother's hand, then lust for blood will disclose its demon face,

leaving its disguise as a Goddess. | If such be your wish I bow my head to it. 21

[Jaising rushes in.]

Jaising

Tell me, Goddess, dost thou truly want King's blood? Ask it in thine own voice, and thou shalt have it.

A Voice

I want King's blood.

Jaising

King, say your last prayer, for your time has come.

Govinda

What makes you say it, Jaising ?

Jaising

Did you not hear what the Goddess said ?

Govinda

It was not the Goddess. I heard the familiar voice of Raghupati.

Jaising

The voice of Raghupati ? No, no, ! Drive me not from doubt to doubt. It is all the same, whether the voice comes from the Goddess, or from my Master.—

*[He unsheathes his knife, and
then throws it away.]*

Listen to the cry of thy children, Mother. Let there be only flowers, the beautiful flowers for thy offerings,—no more blood. They are

red even as blood,—these bunches of hibiscus. They have come out of the heart-burst of the earth, pained at the slaughter of her children. Accept this. Thou must accept this. I defy thy anger. Blood thou shalt never have. Redden thine eyes. Raise thy sword. Bring thy furies of destruction. I do not fear thee.—King, leave this temple to its Goddess, and go to your men.

[Govinda goes.]

Alas, alas, in a moment I gave up all that I had, my Master, my Goddess.

[Raghupati comes.]

Raghupati

I have heard all. Traitor, you have betrayed your Master.

Jaising

Punish me, father.

Raghupati

What punishment will you have ?

Jaising

Punish me with my life.

Raghupati

No, that is nothing. Take your oath touching the feet of the Goddess.

Jaising

I touch her feet.

Raghupati

Say, I will bring kingly blood to the altar of the Goddess, before it is midnight.

Jaising

I will bring kingly blood to the altar of the Goddess, before it is midnight.

[They go out.

(Enters GUNAVATI.)

Gunavati

I failed. I had hoped that, if I remained hard and cold for some days, he would surrender. Such faith I had in my power, vain woman that I am. I showed my sullen anger, and remained away from him ; but it was fruitless. Woman's anger is like a diamond's glitter ; it only shines, but cannot burn. I would it were like thunder, bursting upon the

King's house, startling him up from his sleep,
and dashing his pride to the ground.

(Enters the boy DRUVA.)

Gunavati

Where are you going ?

Druva

I am called by the King.

[Goes out.]

Gunavati

There goes the darling of the King's heart.
He has robbed my unborn children of their
father's love, usurped their right to the first
place in the King's breast. O Mother Kali,
your creation is infinite and full of wonders,
only send a child to my arms in merest whim,
a tiny little warm living flesh to fill my lap,
and I shall offer you whatever you wish.
(Enters Nakshatra.) Prince Nakshatra, why do
you turn back ? I am a mere woman, weak
and without weapon, am I so fearful ?

Nakshatra

No, do not call me.

Gunavati

Why ? What harm is in that ?

Nakshatra

I do not want to be a king.

Gunavati

But why are you so excited ?

Nakshatra

May the King live long, and may I die as I am,—a prince.

Gunavati

Die as quick as you can ; have I ever said anything against it ?

Nakshatra

Then tell me what you want of me.

Gunavati

The thief that steals the crown is awaiting you,—remove him. Do you understand ?

Nakshatra

Yes, except who the thief is.

Gunavati

That boy, Druva. Do you not see how he is growing in the King's lap, till one day he reaches the crown ?

Nakshatra

Yes, I have often thought of it. I have seen my brother putting his crown on the boy's head in play.

Gunavati

Playing with the crown is a dangerous game. If you do not remove the player, he will make a game of you.

Nakshatra

Yes, I like it not.

Gunavati

Offer him to Kali. Have you not heard that Mother is thirsting for blood ?

Nakshatra

But sister, this is not my business.

Gunavati

Fool, can you feel yourself safe, so long as Mother is not appeased ? Blood she must have ; save your own, if you can.

Nakshatra

But she wants King's blood.

Gunavati

who told you that ?

Nakshatra

I know it from one, to whom the Goddess herself sends her dreams.

Gunavati

Then that boy must die for the King. His blood is more precious to your brother than his own, and the King can only be saved by paying the price, which is more than his life.

Nakshatra

I understand.

Gunavati

Then lose no time. Run after him. He is not gone far. But remember. Offer him in my name.

Nakshatra

Yes, I will.

Gunavati

The Queen's offerings have been turned back from Mother's gate. Pray to her that she may forgive me.

[They go out.]

Spark - Particle of fire

SCENE III

(Enters JAISING.)

Jaising

गजराज

2
Goddess, is there any little thing, that yet
remains, out of the wreck of thee? If there
be but a faintest spark of thy light in the
remotest of the stars of evening, answer my
cry, though thy voice be the feeblest. Say to
me, "Child, here I am." / No, she is nowhere.
She is ^{nothing} naught. But take pity upon Jaising,
O Illusion, and for him become true. Art
thou so irredeemably false, that not even my
love can send the slightest tremor of life
through thy nothingness? / O fool, for whom
have you upturned your cup of life, emptying
it to the last drop?—for this unanswering
void,—truthless, merciless, and motherless?

(Enters APARNA.) This unreal image
दुम्ब

24
Aparna, they drive you away from the
temple; yet you come back over and over
again. For you are true, and truth cannot be

banished. We enshrine falsehood in our temple, with all devotion ; yet she is never there. \Leave me not, Aparna. Sit here by my side. Why are you so sad, my darling ?

25 { Do you miss some god, who is god no longer ? But is there any need of God in this little world of ours ? Let us be fearlessly godless and come closer to each other. They want our blood. And for this they have come down to the dust of our earth, leaving their magnificence of heaven. For in their heaven there are no men, no creatures, who can suffer. No, my girl, there is no Goddess. }

Aparna

Then leave this temple, and come away with me.

Jaising

Leave this temple ? Yes, I will leave. Alas, Aparna, I must leave. Yet I cannot leave it, before I have paid my last dues to the——. But let that be. Come closer to me, my love. Whisper something to my ears, which will overflow this life with sweetness, flooding death itself.

Aparna

Words do not flow, when the heart is full.

Jaising

Then lean your head on my breast. Let the silence of two eternities. Life and death, touch each other. But no more of this. I must go.

Aparna

Jaising, do not be cruel. Can you not feel what I have suffered ?

Jaising

Am I cruel ? Is this your last word to me ? Cruel, as that block of stone, whom I called Goddess ? Aparna, my beloved, if you were the Goddess, you would know what fire is this that burns my heart. But you *are* my Goddess. Do you know how I know it ?

Aparna

Tell me.

Jaising

You bring to me your sacrifice every moment, as a mother does to her child. God must be all sacrifice, pouring out his life in all creation.

Aparna

Jaising, come, let us leave this temple and go away together.

Jaising

Save me, Aparna, have mercy upon me and leave me. I have only one object in my life. Do not usurp its place.

-[Rushes out.

Aparna

Again and again I have suffered. But my strength is gone. My heart breaks.

[She goes out.

(Enter RAGHUPATI and PRINCE NAKSHATRA.)

Raghupati

Prince, where have you kept the boy ?

Nakshatra

He is in the room, where the vessels for worship are kept. He has cried himself to sleep. I think I shall never be able to bear it, when he wakes up again.

Raghupati

Jaising was of the same age when he came to me. And I remember how he cried till he

slept at the feet of the Goddess,—the temple lamp dimly shining on his tear-stained child-face. It was a stormy evening like this.

Nakshatra

Father, delay not. I wish to finish it all, while he is sleeping. His cry pierces my heart like a knife.

Raghupati

I will drug him to sleep, if he wakes up.

Nakshatra

The king will soon find it out, if you are not quick. For, in the evening, he leaves the care of his kingdom to come to this boy.

Raghupati

Have more faith in the Goddess. The victim is now in her own hands and shall never escape.

Nakshatra

But Chandpal is so watchful.

Raghupati

Not more so than our Mother.

Nakshatra

I thought I saw a shadow pass by.

Raghupati

The shadow of your own fear.

Nakshatra

Do we not hear the sound of a cry ?

Raghupati

26 The sound of your own heart. Shake off
 your despondency, Prince. Let us drink this
 wine duly consecrated.) So long as the purpose
 remains in the mind, it looms ^{great} large and fearful.
 In action it becomes small. The vapour is
 dark and diffused. It dissolves into water
 drops, that are small and ^{sparkling} sparkling. Prince,
 it is nothing. It takes only a moment, not
 more than it does to snuff a candle. That life's
 light will die in a flash, like lightning in the
 stormy night of July, leaving its thunderbolt
 for ever deep in the King's pride. But, Prince,
 why are you so silent ?

Nakshatra

I think we should not be too rash. Leave
 this work till tomorrow night.

Raghupati

Tonight is as good as tomorrow night,
perhaps better.

Nakshatra

Listen to the sound of footsteps.

Raghupati

I do not hear it.

Nakshatra

See there,— the light.

Raghupati

The King comes. I fear we have delayed
too long.

(*KING comes with attendants.*)

Govinda

Make them prisoners. (*To Raghupati*) Have
you anything to say ?

Raghupati

Nothing.

Govinda

Do you admit your crime ?

Raghupati

Crime ? Yes, my crime was that, in my weakness, I delayed in carrying out Mother's service. The punishment comes from the Goddess. You are merely her instrument.

Govinda

According to my law, my soldiers shall escort you to exile, Raghupati, where you shall spend eight years of your life.

Raghupati

King, I never bent my knees to any mortal in my life. I am a Brahmin. Your caste is lower than mine. Yet in all humility, I pray to you, give me only one day's time.

Govinda

I grant it.

Raghupati

(Mockingly.) You are the king of all kings. Your majesty and mercy are alike immeasurable. Whereas I am a mere worm, hiding in the dust.

[He goes out.]

Govinda

Nakshatra, admit your guilt.

Nakshatra

I am guilty, Sire, and I dare not ask for your pardon.

Govinda

Prince, I know you are tender of heart. Tell me, who beguiled you with evil counsel?

Nakshatra

I will not take other names, King. My guilt is my own. You have pardoned your foolish brother more than once, and once more he begs to be pardoned.

Govinda

Nakshatra, leave my feet. The judge is still more bound by his laws than his prisoner.

Attendants

Sire, remember that he is your brother, and pardon him.

Govinda

Let me remember that I am a King. Nakshatra shall remain in exile for eight years, in the house we have built, by the sacred river, outside limits of Tripura. (*Taking Nakshatra's hands*). The punishment is not

yours only, brother, but also mine,—the more so because I cannot share it bodily. The vacancy that you leave in the palace will prick my heart, every day, with a thousand needles. May the gods be more friendly to you, while you are away from us.

[*They all go out.*

(*Enter RAGHUPATI and JAISING.*)

Raghupati

My pride wallows in the mire. I have shamed my Brahminhood. I am no longer your Master, my child. Yesterday I had the authority to command you. Today I can only beg your favour. That light is extinct in me, which gave me the right to defy King's power. The earthen lamp can be replenished and lighted again and again, but the star once extinguished is lost for ever. I am that lost star. Life's days are mere tinsel, most trifling of God's gifts, and I had to beg for one of those days from the King with bent knees. Let that one day be not in vain. Let its infamous black brows be red with King's blood before it dies. Why do you not speak, my boy? Though I forsake my place as your Master,

yet have I not the right to claim your obedience as your father,—I who am more than a father to you, because father to an orphan? But that man is the most miserable of all beggars, who has to beg for love. You are still silent, my child? Then let my knees bend to you, who were smaller than my knees when you first came to my arms.

Jaising

Father, do not torture the heart that is already broken. If the Goddess thirsts for kingly blood, I will bring it to her before to-night. I will pay all my debts, yes, every farthing. Keep ready for my return. I will delay not.

[Goes out.]

(Storm outside.)

Raghupati

She is awake at last, the Terrible. Her curses go shrieking through the town. The hungry furies are shaking the cracking branches of the world-tree with all their might, for the stars to break and drop. My Mother, why didst thou keep thine own people in doubt and dishonour so long? Leave it not for thy servant to raise thy sword. Let thy mighty arm do its own work!—I hear steps.

(*Enters* APARNA)**Aparna**

Where is Jaising ?

Raghupati

Away, evil omen. (*Aparna goes out.*) But if Jaising never comes back ? No, he will not break his promise. Victory to thee, Great Kali, the giver of all success !—But if he meet with obstruction ? If he be caught and lose his life at the guards' hands ?—Victory to thee, watchful Goddess, Mother invincible ! Do not allow thy repute to be lost, and thine enemies to laugh at thee. If thy children must lose their pride and faith in their Mother, and bow down their heads in shame before the rebels, who then will remain in this orphaned world to carry thy banner ?—I hear his steps. But so soon ? Is he coming back foiled in his purpose ? No, that cannot be. Thy miracle needs not time, O Mistress of all time, terrible with thy necklace of human skulls.

[Jaising rushes in.]

Jaising, where is the blood ?

Jaising

It is with me. Let go my hands. Let me offer it myself (*entering the temple*). Must thou have kingly blood, Great Mother, who nourish-est the world at thy breast with life?—I am of the royal caste, a Kshatriya. My ancestors have sat upon thrones, and there are rulers of men in my mother's line. I have kingly blood in my veins. Take it, and quench thy thirst for ever.

[*Stabs himself, and falls.*

Raghupati

Jaising ! O cruel, ungrateful ! You have done the blackest crime. You kill your father ! —Jaising, forgive me, my darling. Come back to my heart, my heart's one treasure ! Let me die in your place.

(*Enters APARNA*)

Aparna

It will madden me. Where is Jaising ? Where is he ?

Raghupati

Come, Aparna, come, my child, call him with all your love. Call him back to life. Take him to you, away from me, only let him live.

[*Aparna enters the temple and swoons.*

(Beating his forehead on the temple floor.)
 Give him, give him, give him !—Give him back to me ! *(Stands up addressing the image.)* Look how she stands there, the silly stone,—deaf, dumb, blind,—the whole sorrowing world weeping at her door,—the noblest hearts wrecking themselves at her stony feet. Give me back my Jaising. Oh, it is all in vain. Our bitterest cries wander in emptiness,—the emptiness that we vainly try to fill with these stony images of delusion. Away with them ! Away with these our impotent dreams, that harden into stones, burdening our world !

[He throws away the image, and comes out into the courtyard.]

(Enters GUNAVATI.)

Gunavati

Victory to thee, Great Goddess !—But, where is the Goddess ?

Raghupati

Goddess, there is none.

Gunavati

Bring her back, father. I have brought her my offerings. I have come at last, to appease

her anger with my own heart's blood. Let her know that the Queen is true to her promise. Have pity on me, and bring back the Goddess only for this night. Tell me,—where is she ?

Raghupati

She is nowhere,—neither above, nor below.

Gunavati

Master, was not the Goddess here in the temple ?

Raghupati

Goddess ?—If there were any true Goddess anywhere in the world, could she bear this thing to usurp her name ?

Gunavati

Do not torture me. Tell me truly. Is there no Goddess ?

Raghupati

No, there is none.

Gunavati

Then who was here ?

Raghupati

Nothing, nothing.

[Aparna comes out from the temple.]

Aparna

Father !

Raghupati

My sweet child ! "Father,"—did you say ?
Do you rebuke me with that name ? My son,
whom I have killed, has left that one dear call
behind him in your sweet voice.

Aparna

Father, leave this temple. Let us go away
from here.

(*Enter the KING.*)

Govinda

Where is the Goddess ?

Raghupati

The Goddess is nowhere.

Govinda

But what blood-stream is this ?

Raghupati

King Jaising, who loved you so dearly, has
killed himself.

Govinda

Killed himself ? Why ?

Raghupati

To kill the falsehood, that sucks the life-
blood of man.

Govinda

Jaising is great. He has conquered death.
My flowers are for him.

Gunavati

My King.

Govinda

Yes, my love

Gunavati

The Goddess is no more.

Govinda

She has burst her cruel prison of stone,
and come back to the woman's heart.

Aparna

Father, come away.

Raghupati

Come, child. Come, Mother. I have found
thee. Thou art the last gift of Jaising.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY-WRIGHT

1. *Life of Tagore :*

Rabindranath Tagore was born in an aristocratic family of Bengal on May 6, 1861. His father Maharshi Debendra Nath purchased a beautiful spot, Shantiniketan, in 1863 and this place remained Rabindranath's centre of interest for his whole life. The child was sent to school, first to Oriental Seminary and then to Bengal Academy, but he did not like them. Then he was admitted to the St. Xavier's School, Calcutta and he received private lessons from tutors also.

He lost his mother in 1875. In 1878 he stayed at Ahmedabad for a while with his brother S. N. Tagore and they went to England together. He was married in 1883 to Shrimati Mrilani Devi. The sensitive young poet was quick to take part in the national movement for freedom. He opened a Swadeshi shop in Calcutta, wrote poems and essays criticising foreign rule and actively collected funds at the arrest of Tilak.

In the opening year of the present century he returned to Shantiniketan. But after the partition of Bengal, when the Swadeshi Movement began, Tagore strongly advocated the policy of constructive non-co-operation. He gained a high popularity in 1905 and 1906.

Maharshi Debendra Nath died on January 19, 1905, and Rabindranath again returned to Shantiniketan where he established the University of his dreams. He suffered from personal grief at the death of his wife

then of a daughter and later of a son. In 1911, he sailed for Europe and then for America. He returned to India on 4th September, 1913. The Nobel Prize was awarded to him in November 1913 for his collection of songs—'*Geetanjali*'. Calcutta University conferred the degree of D. Litt. on the poet who could boast of no systematic high education at any college or University. He was educated at home and in the open school of Nature. Knighthood was conferred on him in 1914.

In 1915, Gandhiji visited Shantiniketan and the personal contact developed between the Mahatma and the Gurudev, as Tagore was called. In 1916 he went to Japan and delivered his immortal lecture on nationalism. Horrified at the Jalianwala Bagh massacre he renounced his Knighthood in 1919. Rabindranath started for another foreign tour in May 1920. He felt some coolness in reception for him in England and he came to France and Holland where he was given a warm welcome. He was advised not to visit America where feelings were unfavourable to him yet he was determined to have his voice heard there and he reached New York to raise funds for International University at Shantiniketan and to give message of the East to the world. He came to Europe again and visited England, France, Germany, Denmark, Sweden, Austria and Czechoslovakia.

In another tour abroad he again visited a large number of countries to give his message to the world and returned to India in 1927. He visited Northern India, before starting on his next foreign tour. He visited Canada also. After a visit to Russia, U.S.A. and England again he came back to India in January 1931.

He did not allow for himself a single idle moment all the while and his time and energy were engaged in national problems, international message, Vishwa Bharti University on the one hand and writings, songs, paintings on the other, till his health began to decline. He breathed his last on August 7, 1941 at the place of his birth in Calcutta.

Late Sri J. L. Nehru remarked on the poet's death, "India's greatest star, illuminating not only our own country but the world with a synthesis of the rich wisdom of the past and of the present, has set." Mrs. Sarojini Naidu once said about him, "In the course of my travel all over the world the name of Tagore was the living symbol of India in every corner."

2. *Tagore and Drama :*

R. N. Tagore's was a versatile genius. He has written short stories, novels, poems, songs, essays and plays and has achieved something unique in every field. In his plays, too, therefore, we find something original. He gives them all a tinge of his characteristic spiritualism, symbolism and lyrical quality. He blended in them the fruits of his study of the best dramatic traditions of the West as well as of the East. He studied Shakespeare's plays well and as a schoolboy he translated "Macbeth" at a very early age. He studied the Sanskrit plays also where drama is a highly developed form.

Tagore uses either Blank Verse or poetic prose for his plays and he finds them both very suitable for expression of his emotional intensity and spiritual zeal. Conflict which is very necessary for the development of a play is provided in his plays by inner conflict of the soul or by external conflict between man on the one hand and

nature society or some other ideal on the other. In providing this conflict. Tagore does not rest satisfied with merely subtle dramatic hints but he insists on broad, clear cut, detailed discussions. They give his plays a didactic air and his dialogues an air of religious, moral or philosophical controversies. On such occasions Tagore the prophet gets the better of Tagore the poet and the artist. But his sincerity of treatment, intensity of feeling, and spontaneity of expression save him from the charge of boredom. Sometimes his social consciousness also prominently comes to the surface.

His characters are his mouth-pieces and through them he presents before us the conflicting ideologies. They do not develop freely in the ordinary sense of the term, but they exhibit a remarkable conflict of mind and soul. Their psychological or spiritual treatment makes up for the loss of their free development. Nature too has the role of a character in his plays.

Tagore paid a great attention to the stage-craft also. Himself an actor, play-wright and producer, he realised the limitations as well as needs of all the aspects of dramatic art and took personal interest in every detail from the costume of the actors to the stage-setting.

The critics who call Tagore's genius undramatic and who fear there is no dramatic conflict in his plays will be convinced of Tagore's dramatic genius by even a superficial study of his plays like 'King and the Queen', 'Sacrifice', 'Raja', 'Malini', 'Sanyasi', 'Bachelors' Club', 'Post Office' 'Nateer, Puja' etc.

INTRODUCTION TO THE PLAY

1. *Summary of the Play :*

SCENE I

The goat of Aparna, a beggar girl, is one of the goats brought to the Kali Temple of Tippera for sacrifice. The girl appeals to Govinda, the King of Tripura, to release her goat. The King orders that all sacrifice must be stopped in his temple. But in the meanwhile Queen Gunavati prays to Goddess Kali to bless her with a child and prepares for offering animal lives to the Goddess. Raghupati, the priest of the temple, is an orthodox believer in sacrifice to the Goddess and opposes the King's order. He believes that the King has no authority to interfere with his jurisdiction in the temple. King's minister and general also doubt if the King is justified in stopping an age-old custom.

Raghupati is filled with rage and instigates Jaising, the servant of the temple, against the King. Gunavati is enraged that she has not been allowed to make her offerings at the temple. She lends her support to Raghupati in defying the King's order.

Raghupati instigates General Nayan Rai to start an armed revolt against the King but he refuses to do so. Jaising collects the citizens to the temple and they make preparations for sacrifice to Goddess Kali. But King Govinda orders them to stop the sacrifice. He calls General Nayan Rai to use force in the temple to carry out his orders but the General relinquishes his authority.

SCENE II

Raghupati persuades Nakshatra to murder the King for the sake of the Goddess. Jaising is horrified at this plot for an unnatural act and bloodshed of human beings but he is undecided whether to follow the laws of scripture or his heart's laws. He does not want that a brother should kill a brother and offers himself to bring the King's blood to the Goddess. In the struggle between love and duty, he determines to serve the latter.

Chandpal informs the King about the conspiracy against his life. Jaising comes to kill the King before the Goddess but he shrinks from the idea of bloodshed. Raghupati again extorts from him a promise to bring King's blood. On the other hand Queen Gunavati persuades Nakshatra to sacrifice the boy Druva to the goddess and thus remove a rival for him.

SCENE III

Jaising after deep thinking realises that the gods are indifferent to human welfare and he seeks peace and faith in Aparna. Raghupati and Nakshatra are waiting for offering the boy Druva to the Goddess but the King comes to arrest them. Raghupati is ordered to be exiled for eight years but is granted the period of one day more at his own request. Nakshatra too is exiled for eight years.

Raghupati's humiliation whets his purpose again and he orders Jaising to kill the King. A storm is blowing and Jaising stabs himself and offers his own blood to the Goddess. Raghupati repents at his folly and is disillusioned about the purpose of the Goddess. He throws the idol out of the temple. Aparna, the beggar

girl who initiated the new truth, is now the goddess for him.

2. *Theme of the Play :*

Theme of the play is suggested by author's dedication to "those heroes who bravely stood for peace when human sacrifice was claimed for the Goddess of war," and we, who are toiling under the shadow of an impending world war, stand most in need of some such message to palliate our war mongering lust. Aparna, the beggar girl, raises a voice against animal sacrifice at the Kali Temple and her voice is heard but not without the sacrifice of Jaising who dies a martyr to the cause.

The age old controversy between the power of the King and that of the priest is presented in the play very vividly and forcefully. Raghupati resents the interference of the King in the affairs of the temple and defies the King's order. He represents the orthodox Brahmins who shudder at the idea of every change in the old customs.

The play strongly condemns the blind idol worship in the temples and appeals to the humanitarian aspect of our duty. The stone idols stand for "nothingness" and "rob us of all our best without uttering a word". The play-wright becomes so vehement in his condemnation that he goes to the other extreme and remarks in the passionate words of Jaising, "But is there any need of God in the little world of ours? Let us be fearlessly godless and come closer to each other."

The struggle between love and duty in the heart of Jaising has been presented with a very realistic force. He is torn within and is tossed to and fro at the conflict-

ing gusts of passions till he determines to end his own life so that he could do his duty to his 'father' and follow the dictates of his heart also at the same time.

Raghupati, the priest of Kali Temple, is no ordinary villain. He is proud, obstinate, revengeful and conspiring but his fault is that he is a fanatic and an orthodox follower of his old faith. He seeks to crush down whoever dares interfere in his old ways of worship and for the sake of his faith he is prepared to adopt all possible means. The play-wright warns us against the dangers from such fanatics.

The play teaches us that gods and goddesses are either in the temples nor in our traditional way of blind worship. Man's real religion is love and sympathy for the lowest creatures. True religion does not lie in religious laws, scriptures or idols but in our hearts. The idea is brought home to us in the end when Raghupati, the fanatic, himself bows down before the creed of Aparna and deifies the poor beggar girl as the "MOTHER".

NOTES

THE DEDICATION

Introduction :

Dedication is an address prefixed to a book which is offered in honour of some patron or in devotion to some sacred cause. The poet dedicates this play to the lovers of peace who bravely opposed the loss of human lives in war. It gives us an idea of the theme of the play. The play-wright uses the sacrifice of animals at the temple of Goddess Kali as a symbol for human sacrifice in war and reveals the inhumanity of war.

Annotations :

- | | |
|-----------------|---|
| Stood for peace | : Supported peace. |
| Claimed | : Demanded. |
| Goddess of War | : War which claimed lots of human lives as sacrifice of living beings is offered to Goddess Kali. |

SCENE I

Introduction :

The speech of Gunavati in the beginning of this scene forms the exposition of the play and sows the seeds of conflict in the development of plot. Gunavati, the Queen of Tripura is childless and prays to Goddess Kali why She has deprived her of a child. Raghupati, the priest of the Goddess, advises her to offer sacrifice to the Goddess to please her. On the other hand Aparna, a beggar girl, persuades King Govinda to stop the sacrifice as her goat has been brought there for the purpose. Thus the conflict starts between Govinda and Aparna on the one side and Gunavati and Raghupati on the other. Other characters who are involved in the plot in this scene are Jaising, the servant of the temple and Nayan Rai the General of the Army. Raghupati instigates Jaising against the King. He instigates Nayan Rai also but the latter refuses to revolt against the King. He refuses to use force in the temple also according to King's orders. There is inner conflict in the hearts of Jaising and Nayan Rai. They waver between obedience to the King and obedience to the priest. The external conflict starts between the King and the priest. The King orders to stop sacrifice in the temple but the priest believes that the King has no jurisdiction inside the temple where religious laws and traditions must be held supreme. The scene shows the development of the plot through this conflict and a crisis comes when Jaising is recruited by Raghupati but Nayan Rai surrenders his sword to the King.

Annotations :

Page 3. Dread Mother : Goddess Kali who excites awe in the hearts of the people and terrifies every body.

Lying at my feet : Under my command.

Hankering for : Craving for, having a strong desire for.

In vain : Uselessly, having no effect.

Baby-touch : The pleasing feeling of the touch of a baby.

Bosom : Breast.

Stir : Movement.

Dearer life : The life of a baby who is dearer to the mother than her own life.

To merit this : To deserve this curse.

To be..... heaven : To be deprived of the blessings enjoyed by mothers.

Remiss : Negligent.

Who weaves the web : Who makes this world just as the weavers make cloth. (Note the metaphor here.)

World-illusion : This world which appears real from outside but is unreal and deceptive in fact.

Assigned my place : Determined my position, allotted to me i.e., the fate of a childless woman.

Page 4. Caprice : Changeable without reason.

- Freaks** : Whims.
- Sacrifice** : Sacrifice of the animals at the altar of Kali.
- Obeisance** : Respectful obedience.
- Hibiscus** : A kind of plant found in tropical countries.
- Sire** : Term of address used for King.
- Poor girl** : Aparna.
- Page 5. His mother** : Mother of the goat (the girl means to say that she has brought up the goat with the care of a mother.).
- He** : The goat referred to as a human being to emphasise the fact that the life of animals is as precious as that of men.
- Restore** : Bring back to life.
- Not mother, but demon** : The Goddess cannot demand the life of animal. It is the work of devil.
- Blasphemy** : Insult of Goddess by calling her a demon.
- Where is the throne.....** : While Goddess herself deprives a beggar girl of her loving goat, condemn thee whom can she appeal to.
- Blood streak** : Line of blood.
- Page 6. Cried for dear life** : Cried to save your life which was dear to you.
- Whole deaf world** : All the people of the world ignored the appeal of the goat.

- The image** : The idol of Kali.
- Does pity..... to gods** : Is it the function of human beings alone and not of gods to feel pity for others ?
- Enter Raghupati etc.** : In this part of the scene the story develops further when there is a general resentment at the King's ban on sacrifice.
- Page 7. Awakening** : Enlightenment of true knowledge.
- Girl's disguise** : In the shape of Aparna.
- Loathing** : Hatred.
- Averted** : Turned away in dislike.
- Scriptures** : Holy books.
- Effrontery** : Shameless courage.
- Ring in the world** : Clearly heard everywhere.
- Page 8. Atheist** : One who does not believe in God.
- Apostate** : One who revolts against religion.
- Morning service** : Morning prayers.
- Banishment** : Exile from the kingdom.
- Subject** : Slave.
- Bind her..... laws** : Restrict her movement with her laws.
- Her dues** : Her claim of sacrifice.
- Revoke** : Withdraw, call back.
- Page 9. Lease of life** : Period of time allotted to it.

Rites : Ceremonies or conventions which have continued for a long time.

Reverence : Respect.

The heart : The courage.

Sanction of ages : The approval of several generations.

Disputes : Discussions.

Page 10. **Preposterous** : Utterly absurd.

Enters Raghupati etc. : In this part of the scene we find that Raghupati is taking a serious view of the whole affair and is planning stiff opposition to the King. The short dialogue in the beginning indicates Raghupati's sullen mood.

Page 11. **Thickened** : Grown intenser, denser.

Insolent head : Rude opposition.

Altar : Place of offering in a temple.

Degenerate days : Degraded times, *Kaliyug*.

Fawning : Flattering.

To usurp : To take up unjustly.

The King's throne..... anger : The gods are angry and demand sacrifice. Let the King's throne be offered as sacrifice.

Distracted : Confused.

Defied : Opposed, challenged.

Page 12. **All time** : The old traditions.

Puny : Small and weak.

Ungrateful
The child.....
King
Govinda

: Thankless (used for Jaising.)
: A child sits on the lap of his father and tries to touch the moon. For Jaising, Raghupati is like father while King is full moon or an ideal of his dream.
: Person condemned to death.

Page 13. Doomed
Creature
Minstrels
Things.....
upset
Goddess.....
authority

: Singers.
: There has been total change in every matter.
: Worship of the Goddess has been banned and the Queen's orders have not been carried out.

Page 14. Salutation
Culprit

Feebleness
Hampers you

: Greeting.
: The person responsible for the crime.
: Weakness of heart.
: Obstructs you in the performance of your duty.
: Goddess Kali.

Page 15. The Queen
.....World
Her petition

: Her request to stop bloodshed in her temple. (The remark has been made ironically.)
: Irrelevant, out of place.
: Oppose.
: Fulfil my Promise.

Impertinent
Cross
According
... ..light

- Page 16. Kids** : Young goats.
Ragged : Poor men in torn clothes.
Bloated : An excessively big animal of
monster strange shape (here King's
pride has been compared to a
monster frightening away all
the worshippers from the
temple).
- Page 17. Her** : Goddess.
Fashion..... : Moulds this world according
dreams to her desires.
Casts its : Tries to interfere.
shadow
Vanishing in : Disappearing into nothingness.
the void
Consort : Partner, wife (here Queen).
Futile : Ineffective.
Recoils upon : Returns to his own self.
himself
Sting..... : Make him mad with too much
madness mental pain.
Sacrificial : *Janeoo*, holy thread put on
thread by the Hindus.
- Page 18. Overwhelms** : Overpowers me with grateful
me emotions.
Ignominy : Loss of reputation.
Sacred offices : Holy duties.
Sleek : Smooth and glossy.
Dire day of : The terrible dooms-day.
Judgement

Shadow..... : Expression of anger on your
brows face.

To respect : To have a consideration for.

Page 19. **Thwarted love** : Disappointed love.

Takes...anger : Appears in the form of anger.

Clouds : Anger.

Sun : Cheerfulness.

Armoury : Store for arms.

Peasant : Farmer.

Righteousness : Justice.

Prostrate : Lie on the ground in worship.

Page 20. **Clasped hands** : Hands folded with respect.

Entreaties : Requests.

Indomitable : Unconquerable, which could
not be overcome.

Mighty as : As strong and powerful as
God's lightning.

Thunder

Page 21. **To try** : To test.

Earthly bonds : Ties with the things of this
world.

Severed : Broken away.

Page 22. **Basest** : Meanest, lowest.

Allegiance : Faithful service.

Wilderness of : Confusing arguments.
debates

Straight path : Direct and simple way.

Swerve : To turn aside.

Highway : The main road, the right path.
From above : By God.

Page 23. **Lolling** : Rolling.

Her dark..... stars : Her dark locks of hair have the power of moving the sun and the stars etc.

Tread : Steps.

Page 24. **Disregard** : Disobey.

King's crowndust : Pride of the King is reduced to dust.

Page 25. **Drive me** : Force me.

Force of arms ...weakness : We use the force of arms when our moral power becomes ineffective.

Sceptic : One who doubts the identity of God.

Ancient fire : Old zeal or force.

Wrath : Anger.

Arrant : Perfectly wrong.

Page 26. **Surrender** : Yield, give up.

Pollution of blood : Being defiled with bloodshed.

Heroes' paradise : Who died like brave men and are now living in heaven.

Page 27. **Earnest entreaties** : Sincere requests.

SCENE II

Introduction :

This scene develops the story further till it reaches the climax about the end of the scene. The scene is centred round Jaising who is horrified at the plot of a brother against the King. There is a severe conflict in his heart between allegiance to religion and dictates of inner voice. He determines to perform his duty as servant of the temple and agrees to bring King's blood to the Goddess. But when he goes to execute his idea into practice he shudders at the idea of bloodshed. However he is again goaded by Raghupati to kill the King. The scene has a very tense atmosphere owing to the intrigues and plots that are made by Raghupati and Gunavati. Raghupati plots against the King and Gunavati offers a bait to Nakshatra by advising him to kill the boy Druva also and get the undisputed claim over the throne. We learn here how strong and unrelenting a Brahmins anger and a woman's will can be. The external conflict and inner conflict both reach the highest point of interest in the scene.

Annotations :

Page 28. You,—the : The idol of Goddess Kali.
image

We pine..... : We have a strong desire for
of it love but we die without getting
our desires fulfilled.

Yet it.....not : You, as an idol of stone do not
need human feelings of love,
yet people offer their love to
you.

You hoard : People's love for you is buried
.....yearn- under your stone image and
ing world the human beings who really
 need it and crave for it are
 deprived of it.

Famished : Starved for human feelings of
 love

Page 29. **To steal.....** : To divert Jaising's love.
heart

Page 30. **Comes to pass** : Happens in reality.

Thirsts for : Strong desire for.

Jaising, leave : Jaising is very much agitated in
.....still his heart at this horrible idea
 and expresses signs of his
 excitement at which Raghupati
 asks him to get away from
 there if he could not control
 himself.

Page 31. **No escape for** : You cannot refuse to do this
you work, you have no other
 alternative.

Her bidding : Order of the Goddess.

Page 32. **To wield** : To hold, to use.

Burrow under- : Live secretly buried in your
ground heart.

The dust..... : Innumerable people have died
killings and have been reduced to ashes.

Page **Old time.....** : The history of human life is a
32-33. **blood** record of the short period for
 which we live and then die for
 ever.

Page 33. Chronicle : History.
 Transient : Short living.
 Wilderness : Forest.
 For nothing : Without any cause.
 With her cup : The precious life-blood of the
 world world passes into the cup which
 is in the hand of Kali.

Mockery : Merely a false show.
Page I know..... : The real sacrifice is to suffer
 33-34. sacrifice and to overpower the evil
 passions of heart and thus to
 offer the pure feelings to the
 Goddess. (Here we get the
 central idea of the play—the
 real meaning of sacrifice accord-
 ing to the play-wright.)

Page 35. I will.....of it : I will get credit for doing this
 work.

Reared you : Brought you up.
 Soiled : Corrupted.
 Release..... : Do not press Nakshatra to keep
 promise his promise of killing the King.
 Hell..... : So long as we think over doing
 doubting something, its uncertainty dis-
 turbs the mind.

Page 36. Making the : Their happy voices and songs
 sky.....song echoed in the sky.
 Drift : Move thoughtlessly.
 Alms bowl : Begging bowl, *kamandal*.
 Sweetheart : Beloved.

- Page 37.* I am..... : I am repeating your orders in
 keenness my mind so that they may
 continue to excite me till I do
 the deed.
- Love, like the : Love is a superficial thing
world giving pleasure on the surface
 like green grass, trees or music.
- But under- : Duty is deeply embedded in the
 neath..... heart like the strong layers of
 move stone or like a solid substance
 which is firmly fixed in the
 heart.
- Page 38-39.* For a man : A man gives up his humani-
gods tarian feelings in religious
 matters (a hit on the religious
 fanatics).
- Page 39.* Greed is : Greedy people have no pity
 pitiless for others.
- Ignorance : Ignorant people fail to see the
 blind truth.
- Pride takes : Proud people do not care for
foot the low class people who are
 suppressed by them.
- Like.....blood : Desires blood of others.
- The sin..... : The sin must reach its extreme
 limits form.
- Burst..... : The excess of sin will at last
 death destroy it in a horrible manner.
- When King's : If the King is killed by his own
goddess brother it would be a worst
 kind of bloodshed and

Goddess who allows it, would be revealed as devil.

Page 40. Drive me : Do not create one doubt after
.....doubt another in my mind.

Unsheathes : Takes out of the sheath.

Page 41. They have....: These red flowers are the
children expressions of pain of the earth
at the murder of human beings
in sacrifice before the Goddess.

Heart-burst : Depth.

Furies : Here is a reference to the three
Furies—Tisiphone, Megaera and
Alecto whose function was to
carry out vengeance of the gods
upon the people. They were
winged females with serpents
hanging from their hair and
blood dropping from their eyes.

Page 42. Sullen : Gloomy and silent.

Woman's : Anger of a woman frightens
anger..... from outside but cannot harm
burn anybody.

Page 43. Startling : Alarming.

In merest : Just to satisfy my whim.
whim

Page 45. Make a game : Cheat you.
of you

SCENE III

Introduction :

This scene develops the conflict by King's order to arrest Raghupati and Nakshatra. The inner conflict in Jaising's heart is more severe than ever and the storm that is blowing outside is symbolical of his inner storm till he stabs his own self. It brings about the rapid denouement in the plot. Jaising's sacrifice solves the problem and reconciles the conflicting parties. Raghupati realises his mistake and transfers his faith from stone image to Aparna, the symbol of human love and sympathy.

Annotations :

- Page 47.* O Illusion : O Goddess who has no real existence.
- Irredeemably false : So perfectly false that no effort can bring you to reality.
- Unanswering void : This dumb unreal image.
- Page 48.* But is there : Here is a vehement comment
who can suffer on God's indifference towards human suffering.
- Flooding death itself : Having the power of conquering even death.
- Page 49.* Two eternities : Two things, life and death, which continue for ever.
- Page 52.* Despondency : Dejected state of mind.
- Consecrated : Made holy.

- Looms : Appears.
 Diffused : Wide-spread.
Page 55. Beguiled : Deceived, persuaded.
 The judge..... : I, as your judge, am duty-bound
 prisoner to follow the rules of the State
 in judging you.
Page 56. Wallows in : Rolls in the dust.
 the mire
 That light is : I have lost the power.
 extinct
 Replenished : Refilled.
 Tinsel : Petty but showy thing.
 Let its : Let the humiliation suffered
 infamous by me be made up by death of
dies the King before the day is over.
Page 57. The Terrible : The storm outside shows that
 Goddess Kali with her terror
 is awake.
 Hungry furies : The storm as symbol of Kali's
 anger at man's sins.
Page 58. Mother : Unconquerable Goddess.
 invincible
 Thy banner : Your message.
 Foiled : Defeated.
 Necklace..... : Garland made of the skulls of
 skulls human beings.
Page 59. The blackest : Crime of suicide.
 crime
Page 60. The emptiness : We live under the illusion that
delusion by our cries we shall touch the

heart of God but they are lost
in wilderness.

Our impotent : We live in vain hopes but the
.....our hard realities of life make our
world sorrow unbearable.

Page 60-61. To appease : To satisfy the Goddess by
.....blood offering the blood of my own
heart.

Page 61. Neither above, : Neither in heaven nor on earth.
nor below

If there were : No true Goddess would ever
.....name allow a stone image to be used
in her name.

Page 62. My son : Jaising
Has left..... : Jaising used to call me 'father'
voice but now he is dead and this
dear call is repeated by you in
your sweet voice.

Page 63. Sucks the life : Destroys the human qualities.
blood

My flowers : My tribute.

Burst her..... : Come out of her heartless stone
stone image where we had confined
her.

Woman's : Heart of Aparna.
heart

QUESTIONS

1. How was the King persuaded to stop sacrifice at the Kali Temple ?
2. Who were opposed to the King's order and why ?
3. What is the role of Aparna in the play ?
4. Write a note on Tagore's views on religion and worship as revealed in this play.
5. What lesson does the play-wright want to teach you in this play ?
6. Write a note on the character of Raghupati. Would you call him a villain ?
7. Describe clearly the struggle that was going on in the heart of Jaising before he killed himself.
8. Which character of the play do you like most ? Give reasons for your answer.
9. Write a note on the meaning and appropriateness of the title of the play.
10. How far can you justify Queen Gunavati in her opposition to the King ?
11. Write a note on the dramatic qualities of the play.
12. Point out the shortcomings of the play from dramatic point of view.

